

➤ SHOULD POLYGAMISTS ◀

BE

ADMITTED TO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH?

A PAPER

PREPARED FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF  
THE PRESBYTERIAN COUNCIL OF KOREA  
AND PRINTED IN  
THE KOREAN REPOSITORY,  
1896.

BY

REV. WILLIAM M. BAIRD,

OF

FUSAN.

Printed at  
The Trilingual Press,  
Seoul,  
1896.



## SHOULD POLYGAMISTS BE ADMITTED TO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH?

PENDING a decision of this question by the next Presbyterian Council, please allow me to present some reasons for a negative answer. Much profitless talk is apt to grow out of mutual misunderstandings. Let us understand each other and give due weight to every real argument.

Difficulties cannot be ignored and they may be urged against every possible position. But the subject is not on that account incapable of a right, as well as of many wrong, solutions. Some would blindly ignore the difficulties and avoid the responsibilities by letting the whole question alone—baptizing all who apply, if not otherwise dabarred,—and bequeathing to the native church the herculean task of battling with a full grown evil. No mother or nurse would treat her infant so. Besides to so tolerate sin would be to become partners in it. It will be found also that the most of the difficulties do not hold against the main question, but only against related or subordinate questions. It is asked, “If polygamy is forbidden what will become of the discarded wives? Which wife should be chosen, the one best loved? the Christian woman? the mother of the children? &c.” Does not the first of these questions seem very much like that other question which the missionary often hears. “If I quit lying and stealing what shall I eat?” Secondary points should be discussed in their proper place, but let us not be turned aside from the prime question. *Should men holding sexual relations with two or more women, or women holding sexual relations with two or more men, be admitted to the church by baptism?* Since no one affirms that women so situated should be baptized the question becomes. *Should men living sexually with two or more wives or concubines be baptized?*

Let us consider, what saith the scriptures? What has been the practice of the Church and the opinion of Christian workers? What saith Korean custom? And finally a discussion of some of the difficulties and some suggestions toward the securing of uniformity.

## I. WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURES?

In both covenants marriage to one wife is admittedly the ideal condition. The pattern given in Eden for all time was followed by the best type of moral excellence of Old Testament worthies. Adam, Seth, Noah, Isaac, Joseph, Moses.\* Joshua, Samuel, Isaiah &c. lent the weighty influence of their example in holding up this high standard.

Those who favor the admission of polygamists admit these things but claim that their force is weakened by the easily proved fact that polygamists were not excluded from the Old Testament church. No one denies this, and more, it has nothing to do with the present discussion. Polygamy, concubinage, adultery and murder existed in Old Testament times and were tolerated in those who were not excluded from the church. Even good men were guilty of them all.

To understand God's permission of numerous sins mentioned in the Old Testament we must remember the dual nature of the Old Testament church. It was a spiritual within a temporal kingdom—the true church, invisible, within the Jewish nation, visible. In the nation were many unregenerate people. Laws were made restraining such yet not so stiff as to entirely exclude them from national privileges. For the real church within the nation, high ideals were held up and enforced by eminent examples of rewards and punishments. The real spiritual kings of the Old Testament were almost as lofty in their ideals as the leaders in New Testament times. The Old Testament church and state were theocratic. Laws were given which were capable of the very highest spiritual construction and yet, as laws of the state, might be lowered in their interpretation to meet the conditions of a very imperfect community. Much truth was taught in figure and by example and was plain to those who had the spiritual ear to hear and heart to understand. The noblest among them present unsurpassed ideals of moral excellence, and by example teach their fellow men what God would have them all to be and what His ten commandments really mean. Violators of these highest ideals and even gross transgressors were often still allowed to remain in the church. But their presence there was no justification of their sin nor of tolerating similar sins in this entirely different dispen-

---

\* Footnote—The reference in Numbers 12: 1, to the Ethiopian woman, whom Moses had married is far from proving that Moses practiced polygamy. His wife, Zipporah, not being a Jewess, would no doubt be an offence to Moses' relatives. Or if it could be proved that this Ethiopian woman was not Zipporah still it would be necessary to prove that Zipporah was still alive before numbering Moses with the polygamists.

sation. To affirm otherwise is to do away with church discipline for drunkenness (Noah), polygamy, murder, and adultery (David), polygamy, concubinage and idolatry (Solomon), lying, &c. The Old Testament being a true history, the heinous sins of many who remained until death members of the state church, are simply mentioned as historic facts. The careful reader will observe that God often saw fit to give them time to repent, and that he often held them up with their sin and its subsequent punishment to future generations in the light of history as warnings against sinful courses. Jacob's many unhappy years, the extermination of Gideon's family, David's turbulent family, Solomon's apostasy to the gods worshipped by his wives, are certainly no recommendation to the practice of polygamy or concubinage. Scripture does not represent these practices as commendable but as sins which sooner or later bring punishment on the offenders and work demoralization in their families and neighbors.

Nevertheless the Old Testament is not without its record of how polygamous relations and unlawful marriages were sometimes dissolved. In Gen. 16; 3—Hagar is called Abraham's wife. In Gen. 21: 10, Sarah said to Abraham, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son". In Gen. 21- 12 he is commanded, "In all that Sarah hath said unto thee, *hearken unto her voice.*" The separation was certainly with God's approval. Abraham did not send her away until he had received the command of God to listen to Sarah. In Gal. 4: 30—Sarah's words are quoted as approved. Though Hagar had a son yet the separation was with God's approval—*not, by His command.* The expression, he "took bread and a bottle of water . . . and gave unto Hagar and sent her away," may denote that he did not send her away empty, but provided liberally for her need, as he could well afford to do. A thoroughly anomalous position is taken by some in this controversy. They hold that while contracting a second marriage is a sin yet the continuance of the polygamous relation is not a sin or is a sin which cannot be prevented, since (they say) it would be a greater sin to sever the relation than to continue it. Then though it is a sin to steal a thousand dollars it would be wrong to restore it: a sin to take an oath to commit murder, but a greater sin to violate the oath. No it is not Christian, but heathen philosophy, which teaches that sin is one of the necessary results of our environments.

Again it is claimed that it would be a doubly immoral act to put away a second wife if she were the mother of children. God did not seem to think so in Gen. 21: 12. It is also mentioned in Ezra 10th chapter that *very many* of the people had taken

strange wives of the people of the land. This was in violation of God's command to the Jews, and when the national conscience became aroused all these unlawful marriages were dissolved. To make the case still more clear and specific it is mentioned in Ezra 10: 44 that some of these wives had children. This wholesale divorce was under the direction of Ezra, God's priest. Doubtless, like all other Scripture, it is not of any private interpretation, but was inspired for our learning. Here is Old Testament authority for the putting away of wives—with children—who occupied the position of wife contrary to Scripture enactment. *It was at a time of revival when the people's consciences were tender when they said "Let us make a covenant with our God,"* and they were acting "according to the counsel of those who tremble at the commandment of our God."

It is claimed by way of counterproof that there is no positive command in the Old Testament against polygamy. But even this we are scarcely ready to admit. It may be said with equal truth that there is no positive specific command in the Old Testament forbidding Judas to sell Jesus. No command runs, "Thou shalt not betray thy master." Why does every one feel that the sin of Judas was an unspeakable crime? There is the instinctive feeling that this specific sin was the violation of some general law—either the sixth or the tenth Commandments. In exactly the same way one instinctively feels that polygamy and concubinage are wrong and begin to search for the law forbidding them. It is certainly indisputable that they are *either right or wrong*. They cannot be devoid of moral character. If right then let us all practice and advocate them. Are they idolatry? profanity? Sabbath desecration? dishonoring parents? murder? theft? lying? coveting? It may be covetousness if one like David covets another man's wife—but suppose like Brigham Young the wives are already his. Then though not covetousness somehow one feels it to be wrong. Few would advocate taking undivided Brigham into the Church. But why? What commandment has he violated? Polygamy is not a violation of the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, eighth, ninth, or tenth commandments. Then there are no other alternatives. Either (1) Brigham Young was right in saying that polygamy might lawfully be practiced, or (2) the ten commandments are an incomplete moral code, or (3) *polygamy is wrong, a violation of the seventh commandment*, and directly opposed to the Old and New Testament injunctions against adultery, fornication, uncleanness, &c. It can hardly be questioned which of the three is the right alternative. We believe that the seventh commandment is the chief Old Testament command against

polygamy, and that the numerous Old and New Testament prohibitions of fornication, adultery, &c. all bear against polygamy. This view is confirmed by the very nature of marriage as shown in Gen. 2: 24. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh." It is here shown to be a religious ordinance instituted by God between one man and one woman. The inferences are, (1) that *mutual tie is a stronger one than that binding to parents*—since he is to leave them and cleave (be glued) to his wife, (2) that neither of the parties can be united to another person, since they two have become "one flesh." "Shall cleave" indicates a 'moral and social union'. 'One flesh' implies that they are bound together in an exclusive sexual fellowship."

Old Testament teaching gradually freed the Jews from the practice of polygamy. The Mosaic law, by "its many enactments, tended to discourage, and finally to *abolish* polygamy. By degrees monogamy gained a strong foothold among the people, and marriage was regarded as a sacred Covenant made before God (Prov. 2: 17; Mal. 2: 14; Hos. 2: 20). Hence marriage is often used by the prophets as a true emblem of the relation between Jehovah and Israel." *Schaff Herzog Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge*. One of the best of Jewish authorities, E. W. Eidersheim, as quoted by Dr. J. J. Lucas of India says, "After the Exile it (polygamy) was a thing unknown among the Jews." *Law and Polity of Jews*, page 101. Dr. Warfield of Princeton, quoted by Dr. J. J. Lucas, says, "Polygamy was not tolerated under Roman laws. It does not appear to have been common among the Jews of the time. It was not a Greek custom."

When Jesus lived among men, divorce and immorality were common enough, but it would be very difficult to prove even rare cases of polygamy among the Jews, Greeks or Romans. In the Roman world the only thing corresponding to polygamy was a loose form of concubinage, something like that existing at present in Japan. "An absence of three successive nights broke the bond." *See Schaff-Herzog*.

To those who had the hearing ear, Christ again lays down new laws,—which are only the old, spiritualized. For the hardness of your hearts Moses suffered certain things, "*But I say unto you.*" Even if nothing had ever been said on this subject before, Christ speaks as one who is clothed with the power to lay down new laws. His words have the ring of a new interpretation and are vital with new life. By means of them we may understand the real meaning of the Old Testament. His laws were for the government of a Spiritual Church, not merely for the regulating of a worldly state church, composed of both

the regenerate and the unregenerate. The Church will be pure in proportion as it obeys Him. What does He teach? Matt. 19: 4. He "made them male and female," not male and females. Matt. 19: 5. "They twain shall be one flesh"—Two, not three or more. In Mark 10: 11, He says, "He that putteth away his wife, and marieth another, committeth adultery against her." The sin is not only committed against God but against the wife. Bad as putting away would be, the sin evidently does not consist in putting away. That has another name—divorce. The Sin is called *adultery*, and consists in marrying another after divorce. This view is still further strengthened by the clause in Matt. 5: 32, "Causeth her to commit adultery." Certainly she did not sin by being forcibly "*put away*," but by "marrying another." These passages are still further incidental proof that there was no polygamy among the Jews. He speaks as if marrying again without putting away was not known. Again, if the act of marrying again after putting away was adultery what was a second marriage without putting away the first?

In 1 Cor. 7: 2 we are taught, "Let every man have *his own* wife, and let every woman have *her own* husband." Individual proprietorship is impossible in polygamous relations. Says 1 Cor. 7: 4, "The husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife." Which wife? "*The* wife." In Ephesians 5: 22—33, the union existing between Christ and His Church is typified by that existing between husband and wife. As we are members of the body of Christ, so husband and wife are members of each other. "He shall leave father and mother, and be joined to his wife." Can he be joined to *his wife* and at the same time joined to some other woman? If so do the three become one unit? Or is the man divided to become a part of several units?

The universal assumption in scripture is not only that the believer should have but one wife, but that monogamy was the only existing condition in New Testament times. Though the everyday life of the people is entered into with much fullness and detail yet no mention is made anywhere, in all the twenty-seven books, of a second wife or concubine, or of children by second wives or concubines, or of any of the many complications which would have arisen from such relations. If the custom existed why was it not frequently alluded to as it was in the Old Testament.

It is objected that there is no command in the New Testament against polygamy. But where was the necessity for a command? If we bear in mind that there is no proof from the New Testament that polygamy existed among the Jews at that time,



and that Jewish historians affirm that it had been forbidden since the time of Ezra, it cannot be a surprise that there was no specific command against it. No condition needing to be met, no command was made. There is likewise no specific command against stock gambling or ancestral worship. Whatever may have been the case in the corrupt court of Herod (who was a law unto himself), polygamy was outlawed in the circles in which the early Christians moved. The early converts were largely from the Jews or Gentile proselytes, who were already under the religious influence of the Jewish Synagogues. In case they were Roman citizens there was the additional certainty that they were not polygamists, because of the Roman law against it. One wife at a time was the law, tho there might be, living in the same community, a number of divorced wives. With the ideals and antecedents of the Old Testament, and with the high moral teachings of Jesus, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the early Christian Church went out into the Jewish and Roman world. We cannot doubt that in founding churches among these heathen they were faithful to their antecedents. If they were not, the burden of proof rests with those who charge them with unfaithfulness.

In the absence of other proof three texts are quoted as implying that there was polygamy in the apostolic church, 1 Tim. 3: 2 and 12: and Titus 1: 6, where it is said that bishops and deacons should be "the husband of one wife." From these texts some think that there were laymen in the church who were polygamists tho polygamy was forbidden to church officers. This seems a very slender thread upon which to hang so weighty a matter. At most the existence of polygamy can only be inferred from these passages. Its existence is not affirmed. If these passages do prove that there was polygamy in the early church,—church officers alone being debarred from that relation—then they prove a great many other things. They prove negatively that even tho a man was not blameless, vigilant or sober, or of good behavior, tho he was given to much wine, a striker, greedy of filthy lucre, not patient, a brawler, covetous, tho he did not rule well in his own house, did not have a good report of them that were without, was double tongued, self-willed, soon angry, not a lover of good men, unjust, unholy, intemperate—yet nevertheless he could be an acceptable layman in the church. Are not all the qualities mentioned in these verses—including monogamy—taught to be necessary in the church officer, without implying their absence in the ordinary church member?

There are four possible interpretations of these texts.

1. *Church officers are forbidden to have plural wives, tho other church members might be polygamists.* This interpretation permits all the laity to be polygamists. Insist on this meaning and it will not be long before there will arise in the native church those who will claim the lawfulness of polygamy for all not church officers. How can they be proved to be wrong except by arguments which disprove this interpretation?

2. *Church officers must be married men.* This is the interpretation of the Greek Church. It is true that the scripture honors marriage and that the most of Church officers in Bible times were married men. Were the question under discussion whether the clergy should be married or celebrate, then these texts are unanswerably in favor of marriage. Scripture and history show conclusively that ministers should ordinarily be married men. To be the "husband of one wife" was to be married, not celebrate. But this interpretation, which makes the marriage of the clergy an obligatory law, is untenable. It is contrary to the spirit of 1 Cor. 7: 24-40, and is discountenanced by the example of Paul himself and of many godly men.

3. *Church officers may marry but once,* and on becoming widowers are not to remarry. This is not according to the analogy of scripture, there being no other law on record forbidding either men or women to marry again after their first spouse was dead.

4. *Church officers must be chosen from those who have but one living wife,* i.e. there must be no divorced wives. This interpretation certainly seems a most natural rule for a community where divorce and immorality were common, but where polygamy was practically unknown. To understand the law, let us consider the social conditions of that time. "There are women who count their years not by the number of Consuls, but by the number of their husbands", says Seneca. 'They allow themselves to be divorced before the nuptial garlands have faded,' mocks Juvenal. 'They marry only to be divorced,' says Tertullian. Matrimonial fidelity was made a matter of ridicule." See Uhlhorn's *Conflict of Christianity and Heathenism*, page 101.

Such being the prevailing social conditions it would be necessary to prevent those whose past lives had been so disgraced from becoming church officers.

As shown above under No's. 1, 2, and 3, No. 4 is by the method of exclusion the only possible interpretation. It also meets and suits all the other conditions of scripture: one wife, not two or more; the undivided home, undisgraced by the scandal of a divorce; father and mother living together through life in mutual love and respect, proper patterns for their children

models for their neighbors, types of the mystic union between the heavenly Bridegroom and His redeemed Bride. Such men only were suitable to become church officers. Men with several divorced wives would be poor examples and little fit to become pastors.

Confirmatory testimony is found in submitting 1 Tim. 5: 3—10 to the same tests. Those widows who were to be recipients of the Church's benevolences must be above a certain age, must be without relatives to whom they could look for support, must possess a certain moral character, and must have "been the wife of one man," vs. 9. There are also four possible interpretations corresponding to those given above.

1 *She must have had only one husband at a time, the other women in church might have several husbands at a time.* It is unreasonable that this interpretation, which is exactly similar to No. 1 above, should have no advocates. Polyandry is always less popular than polygamy. The distinction can scarcely be said to be a scriptural one however, but arises from the corrupt nature of man.

2 *She must have been a married woman.* This interpretation is mentioned simply to complete the analogy. It is required by the word "widow," just as No. 2 above seems to be suggested by the words "husband of one wife." The fact that she was a widow i. e., not a single person, was an indication that she had not an immoral life, as all unmarried females in that age did. But as it cannot be construed into a law prohibiting charity to be given to poor but worthy women simply on the ground that they had remained unmarried, so No. 2, above, cannot be construed into a law making marriage of Church officers obligatory.

3 *She must never have been married but once,* having remained a widow since the death of the first husband. This is not required by the use of the words "one husband." A woman who married again after the death of her first husband would be the lawful "wife of one husband" at a time. To forbid that aged widows be cared for because they had been twice married, even tho lawfully married, would be opposed to the context. See 1 Tim. 5: 11—14 "we will therefore that the younger women marry," and Rom. 7: 3. After her husband is dead "she is no adulteress, tho she be married to another man."

4 *She must never have had but one living husband at a time.* That is, she must never have been a divorced woman. She must be a person of good moral character. This interpretation agrees with the universal practice of the church branding divorce but honoring widows that are widows indeed. Like interpretation four above (1 Tim. 3: 2) it agrees with all the scripture

conditions and with the conditions then existing in the Roman World.

To recapitulate, polygamy was an after-growth, not existing among men as originally constituted. It is contrary to the highest Old Testament types and figures. It is either right and commendable or wrong and forbidden by the seventh commandment. Altho with other sins it was tolerated in Old Testament times, yet the general effect of Old Testament teaching was its exclusion from Jewish Society. It was not practiced by the Jews, Greeks or Romans in the time of Christ. The Spirit of Christ's teachings is against it. There is not a single allusion in the New Testament to its existence, there is not the slightest proof that the apostles ever met with it or that they allowed it to enter the early church. It is directly opposed to the fundamental idea of marriage. It is carnal, worldly, and detrimental to the best interests of the church and of the individual.

There is only one plea for its toleration which deserves earnest attention. God tolerated it in the early ages of the Jewish Church, why should not we in the establishment of the church in heathen lands? This has been answered above by the fact of the dual nature of the Jewish church. The Christian Church has a different object in the world, has different rules for admission and exclusion, is organized differently with different officers and rules of discipline. It is a spiritual body, the Bride of Christ, and it must guard sacredly inherited precedents lest the betrothed of Christ be defiled. God's toleration might be pleaded with equal force in favor of concubinage, impurity, slavery, murder, lying, idolatry, &c. The spirit of the New Testament Church is "*separation from the world.*"

If from a study of the scriptures polygamy cannot be proved to be wrong, then we should have no rules against it either in America, England or Korea. A writer in the August number of the KOREAN REPOSITORY 1895 says, "I fail to find a single instance where God has excommunicated a man because of his living with two or more wives or concubines." \*\*\* "I fail to find a single instance where God at any time condemns polygamy as a sin that should shut a man out from the Church." Nevertheless he says, "I would not be misunderstood as advocating the right or propriety of plural marriages. Far from that, I believe we cannot stand too firm against that pernicious evil" \*\*\* "Within the church of course it never can be tolerated. If it occurs there is but one thing to be done. Cast him out" But why? On whose authority? Whose law has he broken? Would he cast him out on the mere authority of man? Let us be careful. We must get the authority from Scripture or we

must never use it in any case. Look again. The authority is in the Scripture and it holds against the writer's position.

In the absence of Scripture proof an appeal has been made to the merciful character of the Gospel. The side favoring the admission of polygamists to the church is called the side of mercy, charity, &c. and those who would exclude polygamists until they discontinue the sin are likened to the Pharisees who stuck to the letter but missed the spirit of the law. That beautiful grace, Christian charity, was never meant to cover the multitude of unforsaken sins. That would be simply licentious Antinomianism and has no place in a gospel which teaches the forgiveness of sins repented of and forsaken but hates sins adhered to and apologized for. The sinner is forgiven but commanded to go and sin no more. Christian charity asks no more. It can ask no less.

## II. WHAT SAYS CHURCH AUTHORITY.

There seems to be an opinion that church authority is very much divided on this subject. Speaking broadly this is not the case, tho a few individuals who favor the admission of polygamists might be quoted. It can be shown that the Christian Church has always been rigidly in favor of monogamy, and that polygamy has only been tolerated in comparatively exceptional cases. Tho the authority of the few great names really settles nothing, yet there is reasonable certainty that a position almost universally taken by the Church has weighty arguments in its favor.

Much light is thrown on the conditions of society in the earlier Christian centuries by the decrees of the Roman Catholic Church. Altho in the earlier decrees concubinage and kindred sins were frequently alluded to, polygamy is not mentioned.—another incidental proof of the monogamy of the Romans. "If one of the faithful hath a concubine, if she be a bond servant, let him leave off that way, and marry in a legal manner" (according to law a freeman could not marry a slave); "If she be a free woman, let him marry her in a lawful manner; if he does not, let him be rejected." Quoted from "*Apostolical Constitutions* dating before A.D. 325." \*\*\* "For a married man to have a concubine was declared to be adultery. So Augustine in sermo CCXXIV." \*\*\* "Whosoever hath both wife and concubine must be kept from Communion." "A layman who hath both wife and concubine will be excommunicated." &c. *Schaff Herzog*. These various decrees reveal (1) the evils with which the Roman church had to contend, and (2) the position she took on the subject. Not until the Council of Trent (A.D. 1643-63),

when her missionaries had gone to countries remote from Rome, do we find any allusion to polygamy. "In Canon two we read, 'If any one says it is lawful for Christians to have several wives at the same time, and that this is not prohibited by any divine law, let him be anathema.'" \*\*\* "In Protestant Churches the immorality of concubinage has never been doubted. It constitutes ample ground for the excommunication of a member. The bigamy of Philip of Hesse is an exceptional case." *Schaff Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge.*

The opposition to polygamy has taken so firm a hold upon the Protestant Church that compilers of the *Report of the London Missionary Conference 1888* find it necessary to apologize even for the insertion of a report of the discussion concerning the admission of polygamists to the church. See Introduction, page XXXV. "There is the boldest advocacy of the reversal of the policy hitherto pursued by Missionary Societies in regard to the admission from heathenism of converts who have more than one wife. The practice hitherto has been to insist upon all but one being cast off, without regard to the laws of the country and rights of the wives and children." This quotation showed the policy pursued by all the great Missionary Societies prior to 1888. The compiler continues, "As in such discussions the advocates of new and peculiar views are generally the most forward to speak, it might appear, if speeches were *counted*, as if the majority were in favor of the change. Altho we know that the large proportion of silent members were opposed to any change except, it may be, in certain cases to be judged on their own merits, we did not feel at liberty to leave out the remarks of any of the speakers," &c. "The reader is left to *weigh* both evidence and argument and arrive at his own conclusions." A close study of the discussion in the London Missionary Conference will show clearly that the majority of those who favored the admission of polygamists did not voice the opinions of their missions, but expressed merely their own personal views. The great missionary societies, or even the missions, which favor admission are very few in lead.

The Committee of the Church Missionary Society in 1857 printed and circulated for the information of their missionaries a minute against the admission of polygamists to the Church. After remarking, "It must be borne in mind there is no evidence that polygamy was regarded otherwise than as an offence to the Jews in our Lord's time, or that it was commonly practiced. It was also forbidden by the Roman law;" and giving excellent scriptural arguments to prove that polygamy is contrary to the will of God, they say, "The natural conscience of

every man must bear witness, however faint, to this truth. The condemnation of the practice by the Roman law, and by other heathen nations, is a testimony to this fact. The original creation of one man and one woman, may be appealed to as enforcing the true nature of marriage. The saving alive in the ark of men with one wife each, which is a type of admission to the church of Christ, together with the providential equality of the sexes in every land, and at all times, may be pointed out as corroborative testimony to the continued force of the original institution. Various other moral considerations may be urged, to show that the practice is unlawful &c." \*\* "The forgoing review will help also to decide the question of the admission of polygamists to baptism. The sin may have been commenced in ignorance, but its continuance, after Christian instruction must bring guilt upon the conscience. The polygamy which is prohibited by the law of God is not only the *taking* but the *having* and *retaining* more than one wife. Baptism upon every view of the ordinance carries with it a public profession of submission to the Law of Christ, which the polygamist habitually violates. In the case of those, especially, who are baptized according to the adult service of the Church of England, no man can honestly say that he will "obediently keep God's commandments, and walk in the same all the days of his life," when he purposes to live with two or more women, as wives, at the same time. See Appendix C in the *Report of the Conference 1862—63*.

One of our own number recently, by letters to leading missionaries in neighboring countries, collected some valuable information and arguments favoring both sides of this question. It should be noted that those who wrote favoring the admission of polygamists were largely from two countries only—China and India—covering but a limited portion of the Church both in time and space. In the case of certain missionaries to whom has been committed the wide-spread proclamation of the gospel rather than the organizing of the church, it must be acknowledged that their views would be of more worth were they discussing subjects relating specifically to evangelistic methods rather than to rules for organizing Presbyterian churches. In council it takes a consensus of many men of many minds to reach a wise decision. After hearing the letters from missionaries read and the declaration made that so many were in favor of excluding polygamists from such membership and that so many were in favor of admission, I must confess to having had a secret wish to make a very different classification of sentiments expressed. It would have been about thus. (1) Favoring exclusion, about so many, (2) favoring admission about so many, (3) *doubtful*, or *those who didn't exactly know their*

*own minds*, but who perchance may have used an expression of sympathy for the poor second wives and their children and the hope that they be not harshly dealt with, about so many. Many of the letters of the third class did not contain an expression with which I cannot heartily concur, for who does not feel sorry for unfortunates, and who would not advise that they be well treated? The position of many of those favoring admission was much weakened by the confessedly adverse views of the majority of missions to which the writers belonged.

Now comes a reply to the memorial of the synod of India to our General Assembly asking leave to baptize "converts who have more than one wife, together with their entire families." Dr. J. J. Lucas, protests against this action as a violation of the organic law of the church,\* shows that this synod is the only mission in India taking such a stand. No other church in India, so far as I know, permits the baptism of polygamists. The two largest missions in North India forbid it. A committee of Bishops of the Church of England reported to the Lambeth Conference against the baptism of polygamous converts. In their report they say, that they cannot find that either the law of Christ, or the usage of the early church, would permit the baptism of any man living in the practice of polygamy, even though the polygamous alliances should have been contracted before his conversion." The Bishop of Lahore has decided that polygamists shall not be baptized. The North India Conference of the American Methodist Church takes the same ground, saying, not too strongly, that "if we allow polygamy a place among us there is reason to fear that it will long remain a source of trouble and weakness to the infant church, which can ill afford to contend with such an element."

One of the very best of authorities on scriptural and ecclesiastical questions, Dr. Charles Hodge, says, "From all this [scripture arguments from the nature of marriage] it follows that as it would be utterly incongruous and impossible that Christ should have two bodies, two brides, two churches, so it is no less incongruous and impossible that a man should have two wives. That is, the conjugal relation, as it is set forth in scripture, cannot possibly subsist, except between one man and one woman." "If such be the true doctrine of marriage, it follows,

\*This was also the view taken by the last General Assembly of the Northern Presbyterian Church. Without suggesting any change they decided that the admission of polygamists would require a revision of the *Confession of Faith*. "Marriage is to be between one man and one woman: neither is it lawful for any man to have more than one wife, nor for any woman to have more than one husband at the same time." See *Confession of Faith*, Chapter XXIV.



as just stated, that polygamy destroys its very nature. It is founded on a wrong view of the nature of woman; places her in a false and degrading position; dethrones and despoils her; and is productive of innumerable evils." In discussing the question whether Christ made a special exception in favor of those who contracted marriage with more than one woman in the times of their ignorance, he says, "It concerns a matter of fact. Those who assume that such an exception has been made, are bound to produce the clearest evidence of the fact. This is necessary not only to satisfy the consciences of the parties concerned, but also to justify a departure from a plainly revealed law of God. It would be a very serious matter to set up in a heathen country a church not conformed in this matter to the usual law of Christendom. Missionaries are sent forth not only to teach Christian doctrine but Christian morals. And the churches which they found, profess to be witnesses for Christ as to what he would have men believe, and as to what he would have them to do. They ought not to be allowed to bear false testimony." For much valuable teaching on this subject see *Hodge's Systematic Theology*. Vol. 3, page 380-390.

The same author quoted in the *Records of the Missionary Conference, Shanghai—1890—*page 616, says, "That polygamy was not allowed in the apostolic church, is shown by the fact that it has never been tolerated in any subsequent age. All Christians [individuals excepted] have regarded polygamy as contrary to the will of Christ, and therefore it has never been tolerated in any Christian church. This fact alone has, with me, great weight. *It would be deplorable if now, in the nineteenth century, evangelical churches should be established among the heathen, teaching that a man may be a Christian, i. e., obedient to the law of Christ, and yet be a polygamist, contrary to the teachings of the saints in all ages since the advent of Christ.*"

#### WHAT SAYS KOREAN CUSTOM?

Every country has its peculiar customs which should be followed when not contrary to the word of God. In savage countries where wives are simply bought and sold, or exchanged, some arbitrary rules might be made, but in countries like Korea, with an ancient civilization, he would be a rash man who would run counter to all the best customs of the land. I say the *best customs* of the land, for a close study of Korean social conditions will show that there are many customs which are not good customs. To a superficial observer some of these bad customs may, from their frequency, seem almost to have become the law, just as in some states elopement or divorce might appear to a stranger to

be the rule rather than the violation of the best American customs. Korean law on the subject of marriage must be learned, not from statute books, but from what the best people among them regard as the best canons of social propriety. Marriage is largely a social affair regulated but slightly by the state. Marriage law is moral and social rather than legal and punitive. The violator, with his descendants, suffers the consequences in various ways; i. e. he loses the respect of the best of his neighbors; his children lose social standing, &c. It must be remembered that there are in the east three repositories of power, the nation, the community, and the family, each supplementing the other in enforcing social and legal obligations, and such unwritten canons, tho harder to find and tabulate, are often just as effective as those found on the statute books.

The question of concubinage is not so complicated in Korea as in India and many other countries. There real polygamy exists and is regarded as right. Not so in Korea. Tho freely tolerated, the lightest standards of morals denounce both polygamy and concubinage as wrong. In this discussion there has been much vague and misty talk and much confusion of terms. All women holding relations with a man and supported by him have been called his wives. The advocates of admitting polygamists into the Church take a step further in Korea than in most countries. They would not only admit polygamists but also those who live in sinful relations with concubines. Even the best Korean customs would condemn such a thing. Some study of the relations between the sexes in Korea leads to the following classifications.

1. *The Real wife.* She is married to her husband with elaborate ceremonies, first the engagement (명혼), by the engagement paper (례장지), pledging troth; presents are sent, the wedding day is appointed and finally the marriage is consummated. After marriage, too, she is guarded from over-familiarity and coarseness by certain rules. No thought is entertained but that the marriage is made for life. The social standing of her family is the same as that of her husband and her children marry into families of equal social standing. She is the mistress of the household. Other women yield her this position, and the children of other women call her mother. She cannot be divorced, and even if deserted by her husband she is expected to remain true to him. After her husband's death, even tho young, she is expected not to marry again. When led by poverty or otherwise to seek a second partner, the act puts a blot upon the family escutcheon, and her first husband's children are thereby hindered from making as advantageous marriages as they otherwise could have done. The fact that a moth-

er, grandmother, or greatgrandmother has thus disgraced herself makes a young Korean's chances of a good marriage more doubtful. If the young she remains faithful to her husband she is called **덕절** and at her death a memorial tablet (**결녀**) will be erected. Marriage to this first wife is the great event in a young man's life, and after marriage she is registered with her husband in the national registration (**호적**).

No Korean ever doubts that this first wife is rightfully the real wife, or would admit that her legal place belonged to any other.

2. *A second wife.* If the first wife has no children, a second wife may be taken with some of the ceremonies of real marriage. She is usually of lower social standing than her husband. Her children call the first wife mother. They do not usually marry into as good families as if they had been children of the first wife. This marriage (**랑첩**) is more easily dissolved than the first, and after the man's death she is more apt to seek another partner than the first wife. Most so-called second wives are simply concubines (See 4) who are living with men without any sanction. The real second wife is very rare. Dr. Nevius, in *China and the Chinese*, says, "Polygamy is not common, and is only considered allowable, or rather respectable, under certain circumstances. The saying occurs in the writings of the philosopher Mencius. 'There are three kinds of filial impiety, the greatest of which is to be without male descendants'. \*\*\* Hence if a person has no children at the age of forty it is expected that he will take another wife. The first wife retains her original position in the family." In speaking of the majority of so-called second wives, Rev. J. C. Gibson says, "I am quite aware that by Chinese law and custom there is only one wife, and that the others have no legal standing,—no right in law even to the possession of their own children, &c." In the *Records of the Missionary Conference, Shanghai 1860*, page 614, Rev. H. V. Noyes, in treating of dual marriage, &c., says under, "Polygamy,"—"Concubinage is a more correct term to designate the custom among the Chinese, often referred to as polygamy; for: 1. In taking a second partner, the prescribed formalities are not necessary; nothing is needed but a contract with her parents. 2. The act is deemed discreditable, except in the case of the wife bearing no sons. 3. The sons which the second woman bears are not legally her own, but belong to the wife. 4. The degradation of the wife to the second place, or the elevation of the second woman to the first place, are alike illegal and void." Since exactly the same conditions exist in Korea the indiscriminate practice of calling every concubine a wife should be avoided. In a community

where polygamy is so rare it is evident that the case of a real polygamist's admission to the Church would be very rare indeed—the “millionth heathen” in fact.

3. *Housekeepers.* Widowers who do not care to marry again usually take housekeepers very soon after the death of the wife. Poor boys of the lower classes, who cannot afford the expensive ceremony of a Korean marriage, “Keep house” with some woman without marriage. These women are usually young widows, who were not allowed by former Korean laws to marry again. Poverty &c., induces them to take the place of housekeeper in the house of unmarried men. As a rule they are not protected by any binding promise, form or ceremony. The union depending on the will of the parties, or rather of the man, may be of only short duration, or may last for life. Housekeepers are, as a rule, from a more respectable class than concubines, and Koreans accord them a more honorable position. Their misfortune is that Korean law did not formerly allow them to marry a second time; else the most of them would have sought legal unions. Tho sometimes inaccurately spoken of as wives, their real name is housekeeper (가직이). When a man is thus living with one woman, who is practically his wife, there is no reason either in Christianity or in revised Korean laws why they should not be legally married, and, if believers, why they should not be baptized. Certainly some arrangement should be made to render legal and binding on Christians so loose a compact, tolerate to heathen society, but repugnant to the genius of Christianity.

4. *Concubines.* The great majority of so-called second wives are really concubines. There is every grade of immorality here. Some are the rude and brazen courtezans of the street. Some are attached more or less loosely to one or more men for longer or shorter periods. Some have retired temporarily from a promiscuous immorality and are living, during mutual consent, as the mistress of some one man, while with some the relation is continued for years or during life. Children are sometimes the object of such unions, but more often a wanton fancy, or convenience during a temporary absence from home. But while making all due allowances for the various degrees of heinousness of this sinful union, yet we must not forget that it is a relation which is obnoxious to all law, human or divine, Christian or heathen. Respectable people do not doom their daughters to such a relation, and respectable women do not seek it for themselves. Poverty may drive such persons to it in rare cases, but concubines, as a class, are low both in origin and habits. They are usually harlots or the children of harlots. They are never married

Their children can only marry with the children of concubines or with inferior persons. She can be sent away at the will of her paramour, and on being sent away, as also in the event of his death, she will seek another illicit connection, which will be morally neither better nor worse than the first. Her moral and legal status is absolutely *nisi* in Korea. Tho she may have been a man's mistress for years and the mother of children, custom gives her partner the right to send her away at his option. Of course if she has children, and especially if she be a person of strong will and character, she may be able to place various obstacles in the way of being sent away; but neither legally has she any more right to live with the man than she would in America. If the fact that there are children by such illicit connections should license the admission of persons so situated into the Church in Korea then the equal fact that dissolute people in other countries have illegitimate children should be a plea not only for allowing them to continue their dissolute habits, but for giving the sanction of religion to those habits in every country. The fact that there are children does complicate the case, but no more than the children of immoral unions in other lands. The children undoubtedly have a right to their father's care, and the woman may have claims on his support, but that is no reason why he should continue to live in sinful relations with her. Even the heathen conscience pronounces these unions disgraceful. Can Christian requirements be lowered below heathen standards?

There is in Korea a large submerged class who know the standards set by Korean ethics, but make no attempt to follow them. They form promiscuous partnerships in every town, and sooner or later probably form one which lasts throughout life. Such relationships are formed without ceremony and are terminated in the same way.

From the above review it is evident that the first wife has an honorable position which cannot rightly be taken away from her and cannot be shared with another. She, too, recognizes a responsibility to be true to that position, and even tho deserted by her husband she will often suffer much and long rather than be untrue to him. *Korean custom honors monogamy* It tolerates concubinage, and polygamy also in the rare cases in which it occurs. So far as it goes it coincides with the voice of Scripture and of Church authority in forbidding the baptism of polygamists or of those living in concubinage. The voice of God speaking in their consciences is weak, but it says in a whisper what God's Word and the church authority says clearly, viz., "He

made them male and female" and still more clearly, "He shall cleave unto *his wife*."

Since writing the above, the KOREAN REPOSITORY for June, 1896, brings an excellent article by a careful observer, Rev. Geo. H. Jones. Conclusions, reached by independent observation and expressed in treating another subject, are valuable and timely corroboration of the views expressed above. "Ordinarily a second marriage was simply mutual agreement to live together, unmarked by any ceremony, tho sometimes bowing to each other was privately observed. The *first was the only legal wife* and in this *the Koreans are strict monogamists*. (italics mine) The first off-spring may not be supplanted, and all others by future wives or additional marital relations stand aside from the pure line of descent, bearing a slight taint in Korean estimation."

"Concubinage is tolerated as an institution but no concubine is regarded in the light of a wife. As an institution, concubinage enjoys an evil odor in Korea. The women who enter upon this relation come from the lower or disreputable walks of life, and are regarded as dishonored by it. The off-spring have imposed upon them certain disabilities, such as exclusion from desirable official posts, and bear wherever they go a serious social stain." See page 228.

#### IV. DIFFICULTIES AND SUGGESTIONS.

The voice of Scripture and of Church authority agree, and good Korean custom says very much the same thing. Nevertheless all kinds of immoral connections are found to exist in Korea. Separation would often cause hardship to all concerned. What is the church going to do about it? We have no option. We must first obey the Master as His will is expressed in His revealed Word, and second, we must be faithful to the traditions and standards of the Church which sent us out. We make no war with customs outside of the church, tho a firm stand for the right at first will ultimately reach far beyond the Church membership. But in propagating the Church we are enunciators of its law and its polity. We are not clothed with authority to make changes on our own responsibility in order to meet the demands of a regenerate human nature.

Difficulties are admitted. Sin committed even ignorantly always puts people into positions hard to escape from without suffering, and worse still, often involves the suffering of the innocent. But why does the presence of a difficulty or a hardship suggest an impossibility to a Christian? No promise was ever made him that his road would be a smooth one, free from

stones and thorns. But it is heathen not Christian philosophy which teaches a gospel of hopelessness. It is certainly axiomatic that the commission of sin is never a necessity. There must be some way of escape from sin without further sinning, however rough the road may be. Christianity holds out to the struggler, *after he has obtained his own consent and cooperation*, the certain hope of escape from the necessity of further sinning. The very word Christian compels the mental image of one who has taken up his cross and is following a Suffering Master. It is for supposed Christians that Church rules are being made, and to such Christ said, if thy hand or thy foot cause thee to offend, cut them off, if thine eye cause thee to offend, pluck it out. To the truly renewed Christian, the nature living in submission to the will of Christ, the thought of being compelled to live with two or three concubines would not only be repugnant, but he would recognize the difficulties of putting them away as only part of his fixed life principle—viz. taking up his cross and following Christ. See Mark 8: 34–38, and 9: 43–50 “There are many hard things to do in Christianity. A man is required to give up his life if need he in order to be a Christian. \*\*\* This is the law of Christ. A great deal that is sentimental may be said against it; but that is the law of Scripture. Then we are to remember another thing. When Christ calls us to do anything He always gives us grace to do it. To do right wrongs no man.”

If such is the law of Christ, the Church cannot give her sanction to continuation in sin simply to avoid difficulties. It is sometimes objected that to send away concubines, &c., deprives them of the help of a Christian home. To which I reply that a *true Christian home* is impossible either for them or the other inmates unless they are sent away. A polygamous home is an unclean place and certainly a place where it would be impossible to live according to the directions of 1 Pet. 3: 7. Prayers would undoubtedly be much hindered if not entirely prevented by such unchristian conditions. In this opinion many missionaries agree. “I never knew a single instance in which a polygamist who continued in that state made any progress in religion. I do not believe that I ever knew one of the many whom we have had in that state being really converted to God. People submitted cheerfully, when they wanted to be right with God, to abandon all their wives except one.”—Rev. James Calvert, from the Fiji Islands. “We cannot tamper with polygamy. I have never known an individual get on in the least in his religion who refused to abandon every wife, but one. I have found that the natives have a conscience, and they feel that it is wrong in the sight of Him who made them, &c.”

"It is better to have a few firm Christians with clean moral principles, who will hold up the light of the Gospel of the Son of God, than to have a multitude who have sin mixed up in them. \*\*\* If we want a Church that will shine out 'clear as the sun and as fair as the moon, and as terrible as an army with banners,' against every sin, that Church must be purged from sin, and polygamy is one of the worst and most demoralizing of sins."—Rev. J. A. Taylor. See London Conference Report.

It is sometimes said that this question will in time settle itself. But this is impossible. For years to come the Church will probably be surrounded by the same conditions as at present, corrupting its moral tone, destroying its sense of the sinfulness of polygamy, and furnishing polygamous candidates for baptism. One leak is sufficient to sink a ship. Polygamy will get in if an opening is left for it to enter. On what scripture grounds could one be cast out of the Church for contracting a polygamous alliance after baptism, in the face of the fact that he had seen his polygamous neighbor received into fellowship? In both cases the sin is committed against light. But granting that to sin against the greater light is the more heinous crime, yet his condition and its difficulties are the same. Suppose that such a man is cast out of the Church for polygamy and afterwards repents; wherein is his case easier to deal with than that of the polygamous candidate for baptism? His children, too, will need care, and his concubines will also need comfort, and should not be unkindly dealt with. Sentimental reasons could be found for receiving them all into the Church. The concubine would be retained at only the cost of a few months or years suspension from Church privileges. Why not? His neighbor was admitted to Church under an interpretation of I Tim. 3: 2, which allowed every man except Church officers to have several wives. Why should he also not take advantage of his privileges?

It is asked, by way of objection, how can a moral obligation, previously entered into, be annulled because a man has become a Christian? *True. The very objection is that this is an immoral connection, compelling the continuance of a sinful relation. Therefore it is bound to be broken up. How long would such a plea stand in a Christian country? The man who marries a second wife will be prosecuted for bigamy, and the preacher who knowingly performs the ceremony may rest in an adjoining cell. A promise to kill an enemy, to sacrifice to an idol, an oath to do wrong—however solemnly made—must in duty be broken. It is a sin to take such an oath, but not to break it. It is a violation of the eternal principles of right, and is morally null and void. Is a man morally bound to continue living with a concubine? Is*



concubinage in Asia more moral or more binding than bigamy is in Europe and America? Children may constitute a claim to support, but there is no promise nor obligation founded on Scripture, Korean custom, or reason, for a man to continue in sin with a concubine. Christian courts hold that a wrong done to a woman puts a claim upon him, which it takes either by fine or imprisonment, but never by allowing him to continue the sinful relation if he has a wife living.

It is not true, as has been objected, that the discarded mistress has been "sent out to a life of sin and shame." She has always lived a life of sin and shame, and the separation simply discontinues the sinful relation with the applicant for baptism. Plain talk is necessary in order to disillusionize this subject from the false light in which it had been placed. In both Christian and Korean eyes she is a concubine, living a disreputable life.

Since it is unquestionable that in the majority of cases there is but one wife, and in the few cases where there are two wives the first is preeminent in standing and rights, it does not rest with us to decide which wife shall be chosen. So far as women have rights in Korea the one first married has every legal and moral right to the position of wife. It would be a most unspeakable mistake therefore for a missionary to violate all these rights by giving the sanction of a religious ceremony to the man's union either with a former or a newly selected concubine. I have even read that in Africa, the moral enormity is occasionally committed of allowing a man to dismiss all former wives and marry a new one on the plea that heathen marriages are not marriages at all. It would be impossible to find justification for this either in Scripture or in Korean custom. The claim of the first wife is still further strengthened by the fact that in the majority of cases she will try to be faithful to her husband even tho he is unfaithful to her.

It is sometimes mistakenly supposed that those who are opposed to the admission of polygamists also are opposed to treating the superfluous women and children humanely. There is no necessity that they be mistreated. They should be kindly dealt with and if possible won to Christ. Temporarily at least they should be supported with as comfortable support as that to which they have been accustomed. All that need be demanded is the discontinuance of the sinful relation with the applicant for baptism.

It is evident that the chief difficulty with the question is what to do with the second wives. There has been a contract, and the woman has not previously been a person of a low life and habits as is the case with concubines. The difficulty is a

real one and cannot be regarded lightly. But in transition times difficulties are always more numerous and heavier to carry. It must constantly be remembered, too, that the Christian is called to a life of self sacrifice. No better application of Mark 30: 39, where men are called upon to leave "wife or children" \*\*\* "for my sake and the gospel's," can be found than by teaching the duty of discontinuing a polygamous union.

Certainly there is no more Scripture against the taking of twenty wives than there is against the taking of two. If one is not forbidden by the seventh commandment or by Gen. 2: 23-24 neither is the other. Who would teach that a man with twenty wives should be admitted to the Church. Yet if mere difficulties are to be considered rather than a question of right then it would certainly be twenty times as difficult to separate from twenty as to separate from one. More difficult and more obligatory, because the sin is multiplied. Difficulties are no measure either of duty or exemption from duty.

The second wife should be supported in separation as long as she wishes to remain. If she depart, the man is not bound in such cases.

An applicant whose first wife is dead, or has been unfaithful and thus given cause for divorce, should be free to regard his second wife as his real wife. But if his first wife is living and has been faithful to him he has no right to prefer another to her. The fact that she is old and ugly, infirm and cross cannot be recognized as a Scriptural ground for divorce.

If the conclusions reached in the previous discussion are true, as I believe they are, I think we will find the following course of conduct to be most in accord with Scripture.

1. Polygamy and concubinage cannot be tolerated in the Christian Church.

2. Baptize believers who have only one wife.

3. Applicants who have no wives, but are living with other women as wives, should, previously to baptism, be required to put away all but one of these, and to this one they should be formally married.

4. Applicants with two real wives should not be baptized until the marital relation with the second ceases. The matter should be left with the consciences of both. Responsibility for right teaching rests with us. Responsibility for obedience is with them.

5. Require immediate separation from all concubines in order to baptism. Deal with each case separately according to its merits with much patience and love. If she is the mother of children the father should support her in separation until she

can get other support. But never call her a wife. Of her it may be said, she "whom thou now hast is not thy" wife.

6. The father is responsible for the support and careful training of his own children.

7. Believing wives of polygamists may be baptized. They have only "one husband." If their husbands are unbelievers the wives are not at liberty to do what they will.

8. Previous alliances, which have been severed for the scriptural cause of adultery, should not be held as any longer binding, but the testimony of the interested parties should not be taken alone.

9. Applicants who are not willing to agree to the above conditions should be required to remain in the catechumen class for further instruction, or until their consciences lead them to do their duty.

The above rules, or something like them, will be a necessity until the *Confession of Faith* is revised, or at least until the General Assembly puts a very different interpretation upon the words of Chapter XXIV.

The objections to the catechumenate are entirely removed by remembering that everything depends on the will of the applicant. By repenting and discontinuing the sinful relation he may be baptized at any time, if otherwise eligible. Polygamy and concubinage are exceptions. Repent and be baptized is the general rule. It is only asked that they bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

I sincerely believe that a firm and definite course, similar to that outlined above, is the only way by which the Church may be kept pure from one of the greatest dangers that threatens it. In confirmation of this view, I quote the opinion expressed in a memorial to the Archbishop of Canterbury from an African Conference, signed by four European and fourteen African clergymen and by twenty-five laymen. "Polygamy forms the principal barrier in our way. We believe that to remove it, however, in the way that some suggest, would be to remove all test of sincerity and wholeheartedness in embracing the Christian faith, and thus lead to the admission of a very weak and heterogeneous body of converts; and we are certain that any compromise in the view hitherto maintained of the Christian marriage tie would be a great blow to Christian morality in these parts. We respectfully request our ecclesiastical leaders to give forth a united utterance on this subject, as soon as may be, for we are of opinion that for it to be treated as an open question is in itself a weakness to the Church and an additional difficulty to us in our

very arduous efforts for Christian purity in this part of Africa." See *Report of London Missionary Conference, 1888*, page 66.

I am aware that this subject is complicated by difficulties on every hand. Altho differing from some of my colleagues in these conclusions I believe that we are all alike sincerely desirous of reaching a Scriptural, just and tenable position. With the earnest wish that this presentation of the subject may aid in reaching a decision consistent with the Word of God, faithful to our inherited beliefs,—a decision of which we need not be ashamed now, and which will not hereafter cause any vain regrets,—I submit these papers to the consideration of the Korean Presbyterian Council and other Christian workers.



